For Immediate Release
MONDAY, JUNE 28, 1943

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

The Department of Justice announced today that Ernest Frederick Lehmitz was taken into custody at New York City by Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation on a charge of espionage. He is accused of supplying information to the German government.

John Edgar Hoover, Director of the FBI, stated that Lehmitz had written numerous letters to the German Intelligence in Europe containing detailed information as to shipping conditions in the New York Harbor, as well as troop and convoy movements. According to Mr. Hoover, Lehmitz began writing these letters in January, 1942, shortly after Germany declared war on the United States. He had used numerous fictitious names and addresses in the hope that his identity would not be established.

Mr. Hoover stated that Lehmitz was born on March 31, 1886, at Hamburg, Germany, and was married on January 12, 1928, to Vilma Lehmitz, who was born in Budapest, Hungary. He resides at 123 Oxford Place, Tompkinsville, Staten Island. He first came to the United States in 1908 from Cuxhaven, Germany, and is known to have been employed by the German Consulate at New York City until the office was closed at the outbreak of the first World War. He is known to have made trips to Germany in 1912 and 1929. He returned to Germany again on October 30, 1938, and returned to the United States on March 27, 1941. Lehmitz was naturalized in Richmond County, New York, on October 4, 1924.

Investigation has shown that Lehmitz has received a large sum of money through international banking channels. He has made every effort to convey the impression of being an honest and upright American citizen. He succeeded in getting himself appointed as an air raid warden on Staten Island. At one time he attempted to sell to the United States Government an invention for a hugh sum of money.

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After his return from Germany in 1941, Lehmitz secured employment in a Staten Island restaurant which is frequented by water front employees.

Lehmitz was arrested pursuant to issuance of a warrant by the United States Commissioner at Brooklyn, charging him with a violation of the Federal Espionage Statutes. He will be arraigned before the Commissioner in Brooklyn today. If convicted, Lehmitz will be subject to the death penalty or to imprisonment for not more than thirty years.